

ANTOINETTE SAITO



THE THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

A blockbuster hit everywhere but the States, the *HIGHLANDER* cult continues with Part III shooting in the Great White North—and we're promised it won't suck.

Rumor has it that the Montreal Incinerator was shut down because it was burping toxic gas into the clear, blue Canadian sky, but I put my fear of chemical illness aside as I arrive on the set of *Highlander III: The Magician*, in which the swashbuckling final brawl between good and rotten immortal eggs, Connor MacLeod (Christopher Lambert) and Kane the Magician (Mario Van Peebles), is about to carve out a niche in history.

In this third installment, directed by music-video vet Andy Morahan, supervillain Kane has been buried in a mountain-top cave for 300 years, where he's boned up on magic tricks and fed his lust for power. Busting out in 1994 A.D., after a group of overly curious archeologists enter Kane's enclave, he and his berserk band of equally immortal henchmen take off on a rock 'n' roll rampage to dominate the globe with his CGI-enhanced powers. Standing in his way is the righteous head of the eternal good, Connor MacLeod, whose family-man fantasy is once again about to be squashed by the fickle finger of his never-ending fate. Determined to save the world, MacLeod goes home to the Scottish highlands and sharpens his sword to chop off the head of his worst enemy since his last battle—which would have been in *Highlander I*. Hub?

In an interesting twist in the time continuum (and script), *Highlander III* predates the dreary Part II, much like *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* was a precursor to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

I watch the two stars' doubles rehearse the final showdown scene as I speak to fight coordinator Jean Frenette—who assures me that both Lambert and Van Peebles "fight really good." In fact, rumor has it that the costars have had their differences offscreen as well. Perhaps this overabundance of testosterone will pay

Below, top: Kane does kick some ass! Bottom: *HIGHLANDER III* director Andy Morahan and Lambert ponder the fate of the immortal MacLeod.

Inset: Kane (Mario Van Peebles) is ready to kick ass after 300 years on ice. Above: MacLeod (Christopher Lambert) is looking to chop some heads.

off onscreen and make for a proper chemistry between the rival characters.

While I won't reveal the culmination of the battle, I do know which of the two he-men gets the axe—because I saw the resulting severed head, re-created in triplicate by special effects and makeup artist Charles Carter, whose past work includes *Total Recall*. Squirming over Carter's expertly creations, he modestly comments, "It wasn't easy to do, and it's not *that* gross."

In between watching the 500-plus crew prepare for the shoot that day, I chat with Lambert (yes, he's beautiful, but I have no idea if he's good in bed) while he chain-smokes and I wonder why he's nervous. But then I recall the convoluted *Highlander II*. In a strange Euro-Brooklyn accent, he apologetically confesses, "I had to do number two because of my contract—and I knew the problems."

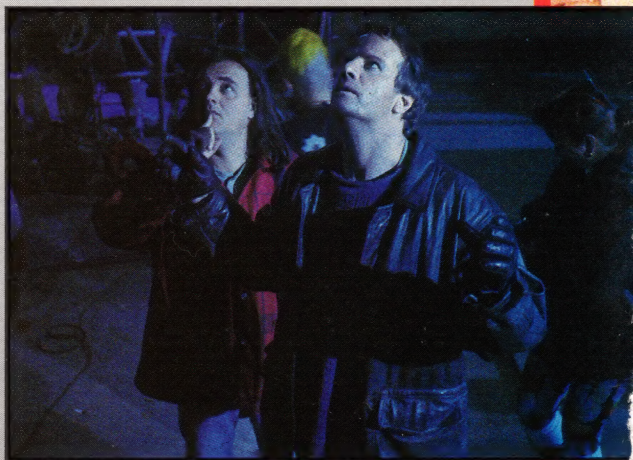
However, the foxy Lambert promises this third installment will be an honorable sequel to the first *Highlander*. "It'll be great. That's why I'm doing it, so let's forget about all the stupid planet crap in number two," pleads the actor. He feels he owes it to his fans, many of whom regard *Highlander* as a sci-fi classic. "I met a guy who saw the original 75 times," the star says.

Lambert asserts that although the series contains graphic depictions of violence, the films do not promote violence. "I never read in the paper that a psycho-killer said he did anything because he saw it in *Highlander*," he claims. We'll see if this luck hold after Miramax releases the film in late 1994.

—Brenda Keesal



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